

Barriers to Implementation

The flawed Mott MacDonald report recognises that there are a number of important considerations that must be taken into account. They have identified these as barriers to implementation.

Cost

Best Value

Savings

Statutory obligations

Staff Resistance

Firelink and other Fire and Rescue Services initiatives



The Governments proposal for massive job losses in Emergency Fire Control is in direct conflict with their call for greater equality in the Fire Service. To take a position which on the one hand calls for more women working within the service and then on the other hand to attempt to force the removal of hundreds of jobs which are mainly women workers is contradictory, nonsensical and malicious.

Kerry Baigent

Secretary National Women's Committee
Fire Brigades Union



Cost

Mott MacDonald recognise that implementation cannot be achieved in the absence of a financial incentive.

It is clear that costs will be enormous and there is evidence available to that effect. Furthermore the full financial burden for this strategy will inevitably fall on local taxpayers.

Best Value

Best Value is clearly a local driver not a national or regional driver. Once again reference is made in the flawed Mott MacDonald report to the need for centrally funded requirement to mitigate the issue. This is yet another financial burden that would fall on the local taxpayer without any accountability.

Savings

If any envisaged savings were actually achieved they have been identified as solely being of benefit to central Government and not Local level. Thereby making it impossible to see the benefits at local level of such a move.

Statutory Obligations

Mott MacDonald acknowledge there is currently no statutory obligation on Fire Authorities to comply with a national strategy. However they do suggest a route by which this strategy can be imposed.

Staff Resistance

Mott MacDonald try to depersonalise this by referring to issues and concerns for example future ability to pay the mortgage as Staff resistance.



Firelink and other Fire and Rescue Service Initiatives

Mott MacDonald wrongly insist that Firelink is a prime driver for regionalisation of Emergency Fire Controls. As previously stated replacement on the Fire and Rescue Service radio scheme is a separate issue and is not dependent on the delivery of regionalisation to proceed.

This is and still remains a necessary progression irrespective of Mott Macdonalds flawed proposals.

There are significant issues that Mott MacDonald have failed fully to take into account.

A major concern is that there is only a slight mention of potential job losses whilst in reality the potential is huge. This is appreciably not just an issue for members of the Fire Brigades Union.

It is important to note that it has a massive impact on the Government's stated position of expanding the number of women in the Fire Service as a large number of those are in Emergency Fire Controls.

The Fire Brigades Union fails to understand why the authors of the report seem to think this is insignificant.



Conditions of Service

Firefighters (Control) Conditions of Service would be affected detrimentally if the recommendations of the flawed Mott MacDonald report are progressed.

The issue of Regional Controls would have an effect on member's conditions of service. Who would be the employers in a Regional Control? What about local variances that have and will be negotiated? Who would these negotiations be with? Which conditions of service is it thought our members would receive?

The Fire Brigades Union is committed to the continuation of the National Joint Council for local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, including as now England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. That commitment includes the retention of **Firefighter (Control)** within these conditions of service.

Home Office Thematic Reviews

There have been two thematic reviews conducted by the Home Office recently "Equality in the Fire Service" and "Fit for Duty", both of which the Government and the minister at the time made a high priority in the service and rightly so. It is therefore more than disappointing that although both these reviews are relevant to **Firefighters (Control)** that those considerations do not appear to be politically prominent enough for any publicity or action to be developed in redressing the imbalances and injustices, nor does the flawed Mott MacDonald report consider them.

Equality in the Fire Service

In terms of "Equality in the Fire Service" whilst it is true that **Firefighter (Control)** are mentioned in the review the main findings of the review do not appear to have been investigated in terms of **Firefighters (Control)** being operational uniformed staff. Thus it appears to be wrongly assumed that the same attitudes and problems identified in the review do not exist in Emergency Fire Control rooms. The Fire Brigades Union calls for the findings of the thematic review on Equality in the Fire

service to be extended, with an impact study being carried out within Emergency Fire Control rooms. This study must include Black or Ethnic Minorities and other under represented groups within the Community.

If the recommendations of the flawed Mott MacDonald report are progressed then the disproportionate balance of genders and groups within the Fire and Rescue Service will be detrimentally affected.

Fit for Duty

With reference to the thematic review "Fit for Duty" **Firefighter (Control)** were not considered. The Fire Brigades Union call for the findings of the thematic review to be extended with an impact study being carried out.

Staffing

Emergency Fire Controls are severely affected by inadequate staffing, as a result of holding vacancies, or failing to provide cover for personnel away for prolonged periods, such as maternity leave. Very high levels of overtime being worked in Emergency Fire Controls has an adverse effect on staff morale and effectiveness. In the most extreme examples, managerial decisions (or lack of decisions) have lead to totally inadequate staffing levels.

This decision to continually undermine staffing levels leads to increased stress, reduction in the morale of staff and feelings of inadequacy by those staff that work in Emergency Fire Controls.

The flawed Mott MacDonald recommendation of moving into larger control rooms with less staff will only exacerbate the situation resulting in more stress, more sickness and inevitably more people leaving the job due to job dissatisfaction."

Personnel Management

Maintaining staffing at their correct levels reduces the requirement for overtime, therefore reducing stress on the personnel left in the Emergency Fire Control rooms, which ultimately reduces sickness levels. The Fire Brigades Union calls on all Fire and Rescue Services to ensure staffing levels are maintained at their correct level.

Home Office – Health of Emergency Fire Control Staff Study

“It is disappointing to find that so few brigades have reacted to Home Office research report number 4/98 ‘Health of control staff’ which was made available to Fire and Rescue Services in draft form in 1996 and finally published in 1998. This report was the culmination of a study commissioned by the Home Office and undertaken by the Robens Institute of the University of Surrey. This research identified a number of inter-linked causal factors behind the high levels of sickness and poor morale in Emergency Fire Controls. These included environmental factors, poor communication and an organisational culture that failed to recognise and appreciate the work of **Firefighters (Control)**. Limited attempts have been made to implement some of the more practical recommendations linked to the Emergency Fire Control working environment and technology, but there is little evidence that some of the more fundamental cultural and organisational issues are being addressed”.

It is clear that good occupational health schemes work and the Fire Brigades Union calls for them to be introduced and integrated into every Fire and Rescue Service.



Picture provided courtesy of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service / Chris Phillips

